

HB 440 – Rep. Doug Kary
House Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee
Testimony – Montana Outfitters and Guides Association

The Montana Outfitters and Guides Association appreciates the effort that Rep. Kary and others have given to the thorny issue of corner-to-corner crossing and their genuine desire to find a solution that works for both landowners and the hunting public.

MOGA supports the NEW SECTION. Section 1 and the concept of a fund dedicated to increasing access to public lands. (MOGA also opposes any bill that seeks to force such access onto private landowners, through crossing-to-crossing points or by other mechanisms.)

HB 440, however, appears to go too far in re-directing too large a share of wildlife habitat funds. While habitat purchases in recent years may have been extreme and without support from many hunters and landowners, this is a new day. We have a new governor and we believe in signing the Flynn/Washburn wolf bill yesterday, he has shown leadership that engages the whole public. We may not need to legislate to "prevent" the recent past from becoming the future.

MOGA has always had an interest in public access to public lands and will support a bill requested by the Professional Wilderness Outfitters Association, which will likely be introduced after transmittal. This bill also dedicates revenue to [in this case] another fund that came from the Private Lands/Public Wildlife Council in the 2009 Legislative Session and is codified in 87-2-526(5): "All money received from the sale of licenses under subsection (1) must be deposited in a separate account and must be used by the department to acquire public hunting access to inaccessible public land, which may include obtaining hunting access through private land to inaccessible public land." Clearly, this includes corner-to-corner issues.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

Jean D. Johnson
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